



BAY AREA
AIR QUALITY
MANAGEMENT
DISTRICT

NEWS

For Immediate Release

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THINK CLEAN AIR WHEN GIVING THANKS

The holidays are upon us. Temperatures are dropping and the scent of woodsmoke begins to fill the air. While the smell of burning wood may bring back happy memories for some, for others it signals a potential health hazard: wintertime air pollution. The Bay Area experiences the worst wintertime pollution on cold still nights from Thanksgiving through the end of January.

The pollutants - fine particulates, carbon monoxide and toxics - originate primarily from burning wood in fireplaces and woodstoves as well as from automobile driving. Wintertime inversions can trap these pollutants at ground level for days, making them harmful to neighbors and local residents.

"The particles that make up woodsmoke are so small they can lodge deep in the lungs with each breath. People with heart or lung conditions, the very young and the elderly are at greatest risk from high concentrations of these contaminants," said Air District Executive Officer Ellen Garvey. "Fortunately, we can minimize the risk by thinking clean air and taking preventative action during the holidays."

The Air District offers these tips for a pollution-free Thanksgiving:

- Resist lighting a fire. But if you absolutely must, use manufactured logs which are less polluting than firewood.
- Everyone has lots of errands at holiday time, so link all your small trips into one. This prevents the polluting effect of "cold starts" - once warmed up, automobile engines pollute far less.
- Offer a ride to friends who'll be attending the same parties. Ridesharing is one of the most effective ways you can reduce traffic congestion and automotive emissions.
- Consider retrofitting your fireplace to burn natural gas. You can have the ambiance of a fireplace without sending harmful smoke up the flue. And, with natural gas, the fire turns on instantly and there's no clean up of ashes afterwards.

Learn more about the hazards of woodsmoke and fireplace alternatives by ordering a free copy of the Air Districts full-color Woodburning Handbook. Call 1-800 HELP AIR. The Woodburning Handbook is also on the www.sparetheair.org web site.

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